United Nations A/51/PV.3

General Assembly

Official Records

Fifty-first Session

3rd plenary meeting
Friday, 20 September 1996, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Razali Ismail ..... (Malaysia)

The meeting was called to order at 10:30 a.m.

Item 121 of the provisional agenda *(continued)*

Scale of assessments for the apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations (A/51/366/Add.1)

The President: In a letter contained in document A/51/366/Add.1, the Secretary-General informs me that, since the issuance of his communication dated 17 September 1996, the Dominican Republic has made the necessary payment to reduce its arrears below the amount specified in Article 19 of the Charter.

May I take it that the General Assembly duly takes note of this information?

It was so decided.

Item 8 of the provisional agenda

Adoption of the agenda and organization of work: first report of the General Committee (A/51/250)

The President: With regard to the first report of the General Committee, which has been circulated in document A/51/250, I should like to inform members, with apologies, of a misprint in the Russian and Spanish versions. For the Russian version, pages 9 to 40 have been printed in Spanish. For the Spanish version, pages 9 to 40 have been printed in Russian. Those two language versions will be reissued.

I will refer to specific sections and paragraphs of the report which contain recommendations for consideration by the Assembly.

In paragraph 2 of its report, the General Committee draws the attention of the General Assembly to the provisions reproduced in annexes V, VI, VII and VIII of its rules of procedure.

May I take it that the Assembly takes note of those provisions?

It was so decided.

The President: In paragraph 3, the General Committee took note of General Assembly resolution 48/264 of 29 July 1994, entitled "Revitalization of the work of the General Assembly", and of annex I thereto, entitled "Guidelines on the rationalization of the agenda of the General Assembly". The General Committee also took note of annex I to General Assembly resolution 50/227 of 24 May 1996, entitled "Further measures for the restructuring and revitalization of the United Nations in the economic, social and related fields". The provisions of the resolutions are reflected in the document before the General Assembly under the relevant headings.

We shall now examine section II of the report, which deals with the organization of the session.

We turn first to section II.B, which deals with the rationalization of work of the General Assembly. In

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paragraph 6, the General Committee draws the attention of the General Assembly to paragraph 5 of the annex to resolution 45/45, regarding certain Main Committees meeting in sequential order, and to paragraph 23 of annex I of resolution 50/227, concerning the discussions in the Second and Third Committees which, to the extent feasible, should not commence until after the end of the general debate in the plenary meetings of the General Assembly.

May I take it that the General Assembly takes note of paragraph 6?

It was so decided.

The President: In paragraph 7, the General Committee took note of the fact that measures introduced to reduce costs relating to overtime would be strictly enforced.

In section II.C, which relates to the closing date of the fifty-first session, the General Committee recommends to the General Assembly that the fifty-first session recess not later than Tuesday, 17 December 1996 and close on Monday, 15 September 1997.

May I take it that the Assembly approves that recommendation?

It was so decided.

The President: In the same paragraph, the General Committee further recommends to the Assembly that all the Main Committees should make every effort to complete their work by Friday, 29 November 1996.

May I take it that the Assembly approves this recommendation?

It was so decided.

The President: I shall hold all members to that date; we will finish work by 29 November 1996.

Next, we turn to section II.D, which concerns the schedule of meetings. In paragraph 9, the General Committee recommends to the General Assembly that morning meetings should start at 10 a.m. promptly for all plenary meetings and meetings of the Main Committees.

May I take it that the Assembly approves this recommendation?

It was so decided.

The President: This is an important commitment on everyone's part and will determine how the course of the work will be done in the fifty-first session. I will hold members to that commitment very strongly.

I should like to remind members that, for the afternoon meetings, I intend to begin promptly at 3 p.m.

In the same paragraph, the General Committee recommends to the Assembly that, as a cost-saving measure, plenary meetings and meetings of the Main Committees, including informal consultations, be adjourned by 6 p.m. and that no meetings be held on weekends. The Committee further recommends to the Assembly that this cost-saving measure should also apply, for the remainder of 1996, to meetings on the calendar of conferences and meetings.

May I take it that the General Assembly approves this recommendation?

It was so decided.

The President: In paragraph 10, the General Committee recommends that, in order to avoid the late start of meetings, the General Assembly should waive the requirement of the presence of at least one third of the members to declare a plenary meeting open and permit the debate to proceed, and of at least one quarter of the members to declare a meeting of a Main Committee open and permit the debate to proceed.

May I take it that the General Assembly approves this recommendation?

It was so decided.

The President: For that matter, I should like to endorse strongly the practical suggestions that were made at previous sessions, for each delegation to designate someone to be present at scheduled meetings. I genuinely hope that all delegations will cooperate.

In paragraph 11, the General Committee recommends to the General Assembly that delegations should be reminded of the utmost importance of punctuality.

May I take it that the Assembly approves this recommendation?

It was so decided.

The President: I sincerely hope that all delegations will make a special effort to cooperate in this regard, so that all meetings can start promptly at 10 a.m. and 3 p.m.

In section II.E, which concerns the general debate, the General Committee recommends that the general debate begin on Monday, 23 September 1996 and end by Friday, 11 October 1996. The General Committee also recommends that the list of speakers in the general debate be closed on Wednesday, 25 September 1996, at 6 p.m.

May I consider that the General Assembly approves the recommendations contained in paragraph 12?

It was so decided.

The President: In view of the very large number of speakers already inscribed, I urge representatives to speak in the general debate in the order in which they appear on the list of speakers. Those who are unable to speak at the scheduled time will be put at the end of the list for that meeting.

In paragraph 13, the General Committee draws the General Assembly's attention to a previous decision of the Assembly to prohibit the practice of expressing congratulations inside the General Assembly Hall after a speech has been delivered. The Committee recommends that this provision should also apply during the fifty-first session.

May I take it that the Assembly approves this recommendation?

It was so decided.

The President: The General Committee also recommends to the General Assembly that, after delivering their statements, speakers in the general debate should leave the General Assembly Hall through room GA-200, which is located behind the podium, before returning to their seats.

May I take it that the Assembly approves this recommendation?

It was so decided.

The President: We shall now turn to section II.F. May I take it that the Assembly takes note of the provisions concerning explanation of vote and right of reply contained in paragraph 14?

It was so decided.

The President: May I further take it, if there is no objection, that it is the wish of the General Assembly to limit points of order to five minutes, as recommended in paragraph 15?

It was so decided.

The President: May I take it that the Assembly takes note of the provisions regarding the length of statements contained in paragraph 16?

It was so decided.

The President: Section II.G deals with the records of meetings. In paragraph 17, the General Committee took note of the fact that verbatim records would be provided during the fifty-first session for the plenary meetings of the General Assembly and meetings of the First Committee and that summary records would be provided for the meetings of the General Committee and the Main Committees of the Assembly.

May I take it that the Assembly approves the recommendation contained in paragraph 17 concerning transcriptions of the debates of some of the meetings of the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee)?

It was so decided.

The President: Section II.H concerns concluding statements in the General Assembly and the Main Committees. May I take it that the General Assembly takes note of this section?

It was so decided.

The President: Section II.I concerns resolutions. May I take it that the General Assembly takes note of the provisions contained in paragraphs 19 to 23?

It was so decided.

The President: Section II.J concerns documentation. May I take it that the General Assembly takes note of the provision relating to reports of the Secretary-General or subsidiary organs contained in paragraph 24?

It was so decided.

The President: In paragraph 25, the General Committee draws the attention of the General Assembly to paragraph 6 of its resolution 48/264 and to paragraph 4 of its resolution 50/206 C, which emphasize that documentation should be available in accordance with the six-week rule for the distribution of documents simultaneously in each of the official languages of the United Nations.

May I take it that the Assembly takes note of paragraph 25?

It was so decided.

The President: May I take it that the Secretariat will take note of that obligation? I am sure that the Secretariat will also join us in that undertaking.

In paragraph 26, the General Committee took note of the fact that, despite the provisions adopted by the General Assembly to control and limit documentation, the volume of pre-session documentation had consistently increased in recent years, without any strengthening of resources, thus contributing to serious delays in the issuance of documentation.

In this connection, I urge members of the Assembly to make a special effort during this session, when the Organization faces unprecedented financial constraints, to exercise restraint in making proposals requesting new reports of the Secretary-General, to review with a critical eye the practice of routinely requesting some reports and the possibility of triennializing or deferring some to a later session.

Section II.K refers to questions relating to the programme budget. May I take it that the General Assembly takes note of the provisions contained in paragraphs 27 and 28?

It was so decided.

The President: In paragraph 29, which concerns subparagraph 13 (d) of decision 34/401, the Committee draws the Assembly's attention to the observations of the Secretary-General that the preparation of a statement of programme budget implications by the Secretary-General may take a few days. In addition, the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions and the Fifth Committee need adequate time to review the programme budget implications of a draft resolution before the latter can be acted on by the Assembly.

The Secretary-General thus considers it desirable that Member States submit proposals involving statements of programme budget implications sufficiently in advance to avoid the cancellation of meetings and the postponement of consideration of items.

May I take it that the Assembly takes note of the observations of the Secretary-General contained in paragraph 29?

It was so decided.

The President: Section II.L concerns observances and commemorative meetings.

We turn first to paragraph 30. The General Committee recommends that, allowing for the necessary flexibility and with the exception of the anniversary of the United Nations, the General Assembly should adopt the suggested format for commemorative meetings, including limiting each statement to 15 minutes.

May I take it that the Assembly approves the recommendations contained in paragraph 30?

It was so decided.

The President: May I take it that the Assembly also approves the recommendation contained in paragraph 31 regarding the scheduling of observances and commemorative meetings?

It was so decided.

The President: I now invite the General Assembly to turn to section II.M, which refers to special conferences. May I take it that the Assembly approves the recommendations referred to in paragraphs 32 and 33?

It was so decided.

The President: In section II.N, concerning meetings of subsidiary organs, the Committee recommends to the General Assembly, on the strict understanding that meetings would have to be accommodated within available facilities and services, that the subsidiary organs referred to in paragraph 34 be authorized to meet during the main part of the fifty-first session.

May I take it that the General Assembly approves that recommendation?

It was so decided.

The President: We turn now to section III, which contains observations and proposals on the organization of future sessions of the General Assembly.

In paragraph 36, the General Committee recommends to the General Assembly that it consider whether the rationalization of its meetings between January and August is possible to allow advance planning for delegations and the Secretariat.

May I take it that the General Assembly approves the recommendation contained in paragraph 36?

It was so decided.

The President: We turn now to section IV of the report of the General Committee, relating to the adoption of the agenda. It starts at paragraph 37.

I would first recall rule 23 of the rules of procedure, which provides that:

> "Debate on the inclusion of an item in the agenda, when that item has been recommended for inclusion by the General Committee, shall be limited to three speakers in favour of, and three against, the inclusion."

I should like to stress that at this time we are not discussing the substance of any item.

With regard to paragraph 38, may I consider, if I see no objection, that it is the wish of the Assembly to direct its Main Committees to review their agenda with a view to streamlining their programme of work, as suggested in that paragraph?

It was so decided.

The President: Again, may I urge members of the Assembly to give careful thought to the suggestion by the Secretary-General to consider deferring to a later session items for which decisions or action are not required during the main part of the present session.

In paragraph 39, the General Committee recommends that the consideration of item 92 of the draft agenda, "Question of the Malagasy islands of Glorieuses, Juan de Nova, Europa and Bassas da India", should be deferred to the fifty-second session and that the item should be included in the provisional agenda of that session.

May I take it that the Assembly approves that recommendation?

It was so decided.

The President: In paragraph 40, the General Committee recommends that the consideration of item 93 of the draft agenda, "Question of East Timor", should be deferred to the fifty-second session and that the item should be included in the provisional agenda of that session.

May I take it that the Assembly approves that recommendation?

It was so decided.

The President: In respect of paragraph 41, the General Committee decided not to recommend the inclusion of item 159.

In respect of paragraph 42, in connection with item 163, "Advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on the legality of the threat or use of nuclear weapons", the General Committee recommends its inclusion as a sub-item of item 71 of the draft agenda, "General and complete disarmament".

May I take it that the Assembly approves that recommendation?

It was so decided.

The President: We turn now to the agenda that the General Committee recommends for adoption by the General Assembly.

In accordance with past practice, we shall follow the numbering given in paragraph 43 of the General Committee's report (A/51/250) and, where it seems appropriate to do so, we shall consider items in groups. I should like to remind members once again that at present we are not discussing the substance of any item, except when such discussion can assist the Assembly in deciding whether or not to include an item in the agenda.

Items 1 to 6 have already been dealt with.

We turn to items 7 to 48. May I remind members that we are dealing only with the question of the inclusion of the items.

May I take it that these items are included in the agenda?

It was so decided.

The President: May I take it that items 49 to 59 are included in the agenda?

It was so decided.

The President: I now invite members to turn to items 60 to 81, relating to disarmament.

May I take it that these items are included in the agenda?

It was so decided.

The President: We now turn to items 82 to 93.

May I take it that these items are included in the agenda?

It was so decided.

The President: Next, we come to items 94 to 99, relating to international economic cooperation. May I take it that these items are included in the agenda?

It was so decided.

The President: Items 100 to 110 relate to social and humanitarian questions. May I take it that these items are also included in the agenda?

It was so decided.

The President: May I take it that items 111 to 141, dealing with administrative and financial questions, are included in the
agenda?

It was so decided.

The President: We now turn to items 142 to 152. If I hear no objection, I will take it that these items are included in the agenda.

It was so decided.

The President: Next we turn to items 153 to 155. May I take it that these items are included in the agenda?

It was so decided.

The President: Item 156 is entitled "Observer status for the International Criminal Police Organization-Interpol in the General Assembly". May I take it that this item is included in the agenda?

It was so decided.

The President: We turn now to item 157, entitled "Financing of the United Nations Support Mission in Haiti". May I take it that this item is included in the agenda?

It was so decided.

The President: Next, we turn to item 158, entitled "Question of elaboration of an international convention against organized transnational crime".

May I take it that the Assembly recommends the inclusion of this item?

It was so decided.

The President: The last item for inclusion is item 159, entitled "Elimination of coercive economic measures as a means of political and economic compulsion".

May I take it that the General Assembly recommends the inclusion of this item?

It was so decided.

The President: We now turn to section V of the report of the General Committee on allocation of items.

May I take it that the General Assembly takes note of the provisions contained in paragraph 44?

It was so decided.

The President: We shall now turn to the recommendations contained in paragraph 45. We shall take up the recommendations one by one. Before we proceed, may I remind members that the item numbers refer to the agenda in paragraph 43 of the report before us in document A/51/250.

We turn first to the recommendation in paragraph 45 (a) (i) relating to item 19.

May I take it that the General Assembly adopts that recommendation?

It was so decided.

The President: Next, we turn to the recommendation in paragraph 45 (a) (ii) of the memorandum, which concerns item 49.

May I take it that the General Assembly approves that recommendation?

It was so decided.

The President: In connection with paragraph 45 (a) (iii) relating to item 58, the Committee recommends that the General Assembly allocate the item at an appropriate time during the session.

May I take it that the General Assembly approves that recommendation?

It was so decided.

The President: We now turn to the recommendation in paragraph 45 (a) (iv) relating to item 156, entitled "Observer status for the International Criminal Police Organization-Interpol in the General Assembly".

May I take it that it is the wish of the Assembly to consider the item directly in plenary meeting?

It was so decided.

The President: Next, we turn to the recommendation in paragraph 45 (a) (v) relating to item 159, entitled "Elimination of coercive economic measures as a means of political and economic compulsion".

May I take it that it is the wish of the Assembly to consider the item directly in plenary meeting?

It was so decided.

The President: We turn now to the recommendation in paragraph 45 (b) (i) relating to item 71, entitled "General and complete disarmament".

May I take it that the General Assembly approves this recommendation pertaining to item 71?

It was so decided.

The President: We turn now to the recommendation contained in paragraph 45 (b) (ii) relating to item 71 (k), entitled "Advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on the legality of the threat or use of nuclear weapons".

May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly that the item be allocated to the First Committee as a sub-item of item 71?

It was so decided.

The President: We turn now to the recommendation contained in paragraph 45 (c) (i) concerning item 98, entitled "Operational activities for development".

May I take it that the Assembly approves this recommendation?

It was so decided.

The President: We turn next to the recommendation contained in paragraph 45 (c) (ii), also concerning item 98, entitled "Operational activities for development".

May I take it that the Assembly approves this recommendation?

It was so decided.

The President: We turn now to the recommendation in paragraph 45 (d) (i) relating to item 103, entitled "Advancement of women".

May I take it that the Assembly approves this recommendation?

It was so decided.

The President: We next turn to paragraph 45 (d) (ii) relating to item 158, entitled "Question of elaboration of an international convention against organized transnational crime".

May I take it that it is the wish of the Assembly to allocate the item to the Third Committee?

It was so decided.

The President: We turn now to paragraph 45 (e) (i)

relating to item 120, entitled "Human resources management".

May I take it that the Assembly approves this recommendation?

It was so decided.

The President: We turn now to paragraph 45 (e) (ii) relating to item 157, entitled "Financing of the United Nations Support Mission in Haiti"?

May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to allocate this item to the Fifth Committee?

It was so decided.

The President: I now invite members to turn to the list of items recommended by the General Committee for consideration in plenary meeting.

Taking into account the decisions just adopted, may I consider that the General Assembly approves the allocation of the items listed in paragraph 46 of the report of the General Committee for consideration directly in plenary meeting?

It was so decided.

The President: We come now to the list of items which the General Committee has recommended for allocation to the First Committee.

Taking into account the decisions just adopted, may I take it that the General Assembly approves the allocation of the items proposed for the First Committee in paragraph 46 of the report of the General Committee?

It was so decided.

The President: We turn now to the list of items which the General Committee recommends for allocation to the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee).

Taking into account the decisions just adopted, may I consider that the General Assembly approves the allocation of the items proposed for the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee) in paragraph 46 of the report of the General Committee?

It was so decided.

The President: We come now to the list of items which the General Committee has recommended for allocation to the Second Committee.

Taking into account the decisions just adopted, may I consider that the General Assembly approves the allocation of the items proposed for the Second Committee in paragraph 46 of the report of the General Committee?

It was so decided.

The President: We turn now to the list of items which the General Committee recommends for allocation to the Third Committee.

Taking into account the decisions just adopted, may I take it that the General Assembly approves the allocation of the items to the Third Committee as proposed in paragraph 46 of the report of the Committee?

It was so decided.

The President: We come now to the list of items which the General Committee recommends for allocation to the Fifth Committee.

Taking into account the decisions just adopted, may I take it that the General Assembly approves the allocation of the items to the Fifth Committee as proposed in paragraph 46 of the report of the General Committee?

It was so decided.

The President: Lastly, we come to the list of items which the General Committee recommends for allocation to the Sixth Committee.

Taking into account the decisions just adopted, may I take it that the General Assembly approves the allocation of the items proposed for the Sixth Committee in paragraph 46 of the report of the General Committee?

It was so decided.

The President: The General Assembly has thus concluded its consideration of the first report of the General Committee.

I wish to thank all members of the Assembly for their cooperation and special understanding. Each Main Committee will receive the list of agenda items allocated

to it so that it may begin its work as soon as possible, in accordance with rule 99 of the rules of procedure.

Before we adjourn, I wish to recall and underline that all meetings must start on time, at 10 a.m. and 3 p.m.

Kindly note that all Main Committees should complete their work by 29 November and that the plenary should recess by 17 December.

I particularly appeal to those Committees which are habitually late to break new ground and join the rest of us in our efforts. I personally intend to ensure that we all keep to the commitment we have undertaken today. This undertaking applies to the Secretariat as well, which must ensure that all documentation is on time, whatever the circumstances.

The meeting rose at 11 a.m.